

Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project
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Gabby Ibanez-Dacruz
Barista, Washington
Member, UNITE HERE Local 8

Narrator: Gabby Ibanez-Dacruz

Interviewers: Ammara Touch

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AMMARA TOUCH 00:00:17: Okay, so today is April 27, 2021 at about 3:33p.m. My name is Ammara Touch. And I'm interviewing Gabby Ibanez-Dacruz, for the Working in the Time of COVID-19 Oral History Project. This interview is being done remotely. So I'm currently in Kent, Washington. And Gabby is in Lacey, Washington. So yes, thank you so much for your time. And we'll go ahead and just get started with some, I guess, easy questions. So for demographic information, if you could please, state your name again. And can you spell out your first and last name for us?

GABBY IBANEZ-DACRUZ 00:01:00: Yeah, my legal name is Gabriella Ibanez-Dacruz. You want me to spell my name completely? It's g-a-b-r-i-e-l-l-a, i-b-a-n-e-z, hyphen, d-a-c-r-u-z. But I go by Gabby, g-a-b-b-y (*chuckles*).

AMMARA 00:01:21
Wonderful. Thank you. And how old are you?

GABBY 00:01:26
I am twenty-seven.

AMMARA 00:01:30

Where were you born?

GABBY 00:01:32

I was born in Ballard, Washington.

AMMARA 00:01:41

What gender, if any, do you identify with?

GABBY 00:01:43

I identify as female.

AMMARA 00:01:47

And could you share your pronouns with us?

GABBY 00:01:50

I use she/her and they.

AMMARA 00:01:51

Thank you. What race or ethnicity do you identify as?

GABBY 00:02:00

I am half Filipino and half Portuguese.

AMMARA 00:02:06

And how important is your racial or ethnic background to you?

GABBY 00:02:11

I would say pretty important. Both of my parents are immigrants. And that's a story in history that I keep very close and dear to my heart and want to, you know, continue learning and immersing myself in those cultures while also being an American.

AMMARA 00:02:31

Totally resonate as a daughter of immigrants and refugees, too. Yeah, could you—so kind of jumping off of that, could you talk a little bit about like the social, political, ethnic, racial or religious communities that you're a part of, and that you—excuse me, regularly connect with?

GABBY 00:02:53

I would say the working class. Both of my parents have, you know, worked tirelessly my entire life to raise me and give me what I have today. And then I guess I also resonate with like, labor unions. My mom and my stepfather have been in a union since I was born. And so I also have strived to find union jobs and be active in my union. And then, um, my biological father, I guess we would resonate most with him being a fisherman. So that's a traditional job of men in Portugal. And it's shifted over time to be here in America, going to Alaska, so we don't see my dad very much. So it's a very difficult job to have. But it is something that is deeply rooted in our family history, and I experienced it my whole life, as my grandfather was a fisherman, my uncle, my dad. So that's like a community and story that not a lot of people can resonate with the way that we do.

AMMARA 00:04:13

Wow, thank you for sharing that. And then, I know that you said that you were in Lacey. But where do you—is that where you currently live as well?

GABBY 00:04:29

I split my time between Lacey and Kirkland, Washington. Kirkland is where I grew up. And that's where my parents live. I moved back in with them just about two and a half years ago, to save money for future endeavors. And so, now I'm able to kind of go back and forth between my partner's home and my parents' home.

AMMARA 00:04:50

That's awesome. Yeah, saving money is so important (*chuckles*). Okay, well, thank you for sharing that information about you with us. We're going to go ahead and move onto some occupational information. So could you share with us what your occupation or profession currently is?

GABBY 00:05:09

Yes, I am a barista for a tech cafeteria.

AMMARA 00:05:18

What tech cafeteria is that? Or like, where is it, I guess, located?

GABBY 00:05:23

My office is in Fremont, the Google Fremont campus.

AMMARA 00:05:27

Gotcha. How long have you been employed in that job?

GABBY 00:05:35

Well, technically, four years. The pandemic has created a weird gap year, but technically four years.

AMMARA 00:05:46

Okay. And are you—I know you mentioned with your family roots of being in unions, so are you yourself currently a member of a union?

GABBY 00:06:02

Yes, I am actually. I'm a member of Unite Here Local 8.

AMMARA 00:06:06

Okay, how long have you been with them?

GABBY 00:06:10

We organized our union about two years ago, I would say, almost. Yeah. So originally, there wasn't a union. And when I found out that there were people trying to have a union, I jumped right in and you know, was like, I'm all on board. As a union baby, I call myself, I was all for making my new job a union job.

AMMARA 00:06:43

So from my understanding is that like, so this union, or this formation of the union—did that, or was that like—I guess not if you were in the founding of it, or I guess, how long have you been a member of that union? And could you explain a little bit more of like, how you got to be there?

GABBY 00:07:10

Yeah. So I've basically been a member since we were able to do a card check. And so I've been a member of the union for almost two years now, technically, and I was pretty involved from the beginning, just because when they reached out to me, it just all made sense to me. And it was something that I wanted to bring to my coworkers as well. I think I had a good perspective to come at it, as someone who grew up with union healthcare, union job security, and all those things to be able to express to my coworkers how much I wanted that for me here and for them, as well.

AMMARA 00:07:57

Okay, and then have you served in any offices within the union at all in your four years? Or two years?

GABBY 00:08:06

No, I'm just a shop steward.

AMMARA 00:08:09

Okay. Can you run me through a typical day at work before the pandemic, from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed?

GABBY 00:08:21

Yes, so um being a barista, we do early shifts. So I would work at—my shift started at seven. So I would have to get up by 6 in the morning and leave my parents house by 6:20 in the morning. So depending on how tired I was, I would get up earlier. I would commute by car to Fremont in Seattle. And then a typical day would be me getting there to see my coworker who was there a half hour earlier than me and helped open the cafe that I worked in. So that would entail, you know, cleaning the whole sitting area and prepping it for the day. We had a fridge—to-go fridge—with beverages that the Googlers could freely take, so we'd have to fill that. I'd have to turn on our kegerator, which had cold brew and kombucha on tap for them to use. And then we would also have to put out fruit for them; we'd have to pick up pastries from our baking team in the kitchen to put out in our cafe.

GABBY 00:09:44

Um, I also took on the task of what we call dialing in our espresso machines. So you have to warm it up in preparation for service, and so I'd have to make sure that the grinder was properly grinding the coffee and that the shots were coming out the way that we wanted them to look and taste. We'd have to brew just regular drip coffee, decaf and regular, to just set out for them to self-serve themselves. Um, and you know, just prep all the cups and things that we needed—syrups—for service, and then we would open. And it was just a wild day of serving customers. So we would just wait for customers to come in line, you know, take their orders, make their beverages. And since I was there for so long, a lot of them I had conversations with, I was friends with them. So it's, you know, it's a different environment than other coffee shops where a lot of your customers are new every day. Here, the same people come every day. And there's the, you know, new people every once in a while, but generally the same people.

GABBY 00:11:05

And then we'd start doing lunches—oh wait, we would take breaks. So we would—I go through, me and my coworker, and I—there are three of us who would work. So, there was a 6:30 person, a 7:00 person, and an 8:00 person. We would all take breaks according to when we got there, for fifteen minutes. And then you continue by filling and making more drip coffee, if that runs out, making drinks for people, doing dishes that are generated from just people giving us cups to, you know, the plates that we use for pastries and things like that. And then around 10:30, the first person takes their lunch. And then I would take my lunch at 10:45. And so that entails—since we work in the tech cafeterias, we have to take our lunches before their [the tech workers] lunchtime. So that's why ours is so early. So I would go downstairs where the kitchen staff would prep a staff meal. Sometimes it was what we were having, they were gonna cook for the day for everyone else. Sometimes it was other things. It just depended. And so that was downstairs in my building. So I would go and get lunch. It's free for us—everything in Google is free for tech workers, so, there's no paying. The same kind of applies for us when it comes to food, which is really rare and nice.

GABBY 00:12:41

And then, yeah, I would have my lunch until 11:15. And then I'd come back. And that's generally when the afternoon rush would happen. So a lot of tech workers get their coffee right before lunch, or right

after lunch. So we were pretty busy from 11:30 till like, 1:30. That was like the window of time, they would take their lunch coffee break, and then they'd go back to work. And so we'd do that. And then, yeah, we just continue serving the Googlers and refilling cups and stir sticks and sugars wherever they were needed, since we leave them out for them to use. And then, my coworker who came in earlier would leave at 2:30. And then I would be there till 3:30 helping my coworker kind of prep herself for closing and being alone, because we would close at four. And then, uh—oh, I forgot breaks too. We take fifteen minute breaks after lunch too. I can't forget those. We do take those too. So, in between our lunch, we would take fifteen minute breaks towards the end of our shifts. Um, and then yeah. I'm trying to think—that's about how it would go and then I would, you know, leave work, clock out downstairs with my code and on my way I went, and had to sit in traffic to go drive home. Basically—it's so weird to think through my day (*chuckles*). But yeah, that's about the basic day.

AMMARA 00:14:37

Wow, a very, super busy day. So after you sit in traffic and get back home, is it kind of more of a decompress—do you get a chance to rest, or are you still busy for the rest of your day?

GABBY 00:14:53

Personally it depended. I'm also very active in my community and volunteering. So it kind of just depended if there was an event that we were going to have or a meeting that I needed to have. I'm very involved with my union. Sometimes there were union meetings to go to. I'm part of APALA, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. So we also have meetings for that. There's also events that other people hold that we're invited to; we're also invited to speak at things. It kind of really just depended. Um, so I would say, like, 75% of the time I wasn't done working; I was then going on to do my volunteer work. And then the other 25% was like, I would go home and decompress, and either spend time with my family or spend time doing something that I enjoy to like, to decompress and be done with my work day.

AMMARA 00:15:57

Wow, yeah. I totally understand the juggling of, you know, extra community roles and just organizing. That sounds like a very, very busy schedule. Do you—for work, is it like a typical Monday through Friday shift for you?

GABBY 00:16:19

Yes. So in the tech cafeteria industry, it's very—as food service workers it's a very rare shift to have. It's a Monday through Friday, and my schedule never changes. Generally, unless there's like, business needs requirements. So sometimes I would change shifts if someone was on vacation, or things like that. But generally, I just worked 7:00 to 3:30, Monday through Friday, and had weekends off. And so yeah, I had the rare chances of a food worker to have a very set forty hour schedule that I didn't have before.

AMMARA 00:16:58

Okay, so it sounds like it's for the most part pretty consistent. Okay. Um, I was also kind of interested of like, what for you personally, what you define is decompressing. So would you mind sharing a little bit of, you know, after work, what would be kind of some of the activities you would be doing if you didn't have meetings?

GABBY 00:17:21

So a lot of times, it's just like reading. I like to read books, but I also like to read web comics and things like that. Mangas and things. Sometimes it's just, you know, vegging out on the couch watching TV, Netflix, things like that. I really like TV shows from other countries. So I watch like, K dramas, Chinese shows. Sometimes I watch Filipino dramas. It's just fun to find different, like, shows in different languages because they're just so different than American TV. I think American TV is just all reality shows at this point. I kind of like the drama and the creativeness of other countries' TV shows. I spend a lot of time with my family. So oftentimes, it's just family dinner, or we hang out at someone's house, or I help watch my nieces and nephews, which to some people isn't decompressing, but to me, it's a—they remind me what life really is about and they're just like, they teach me things. Being around them is refreshing in a way, to remind me of the good things in life. The little things, I guess. Yeah, I also crochet, so I like to do crafts and like hands-on things. So I'll like crochet while I'm watching TV, or talking to my family. That's pretty decompressing and fun to have a final outcome of something. Yeah.

AMMARA 00:19:10

That's awesome. I love all of those things. I love reading too. Okay. And so I guess with that, something that stuck out to me was kind of like how you formed a lot of relationships throughout your job. And I imagine that with the shifts with COVID, with a lot of folks going remote, that that kind of also changed. So would you be able to talk about how your work has been impacted or disrupted by the pandemic?

GABBY 00:19:45

Yeah, so I'm one of the lucky few workers in the hospitality food service industry that wasn't laid off. What I'm thankful for is having my union and their support in making sure that we were paid and had secured our healthcare through the entire time that our offices were closed. So basically, you know, the pandemic hit, and it was really bad and everything shut down. And so all of our buildings shut down, because it wasn't safe to serve food anymore to people. All of the workers were just left to go home. And were unsure when we would reopen; at the time, it was temporary, two weeks, like that's what they were saying. And here we are a year and a half later, and they've only just reopened two of the buildings; very limited with very limited staff and no food. So it's just like people there to check you into the building, basically. Without my union, it would—I'm not so sure that we would be faring as well during the pandemic. We might have also been in the same boat of fighting for our wages continuously. But thankfully, we haven't had to worry about it. And I've been able to spend my time as a shop steward doing Zoom meetings with management and my other shop stewards to prepare ourselves for what it will look like when we go back, and to make sure that as the people who are going to do the jobs, that

we think it's safe for ourselves and our coworkers. We've made sure that we did do walk-throughs before any of the campuses reopen so that we can ensure our coworkers' safety. And, yeah, I think having my union has definitely made being not at work—but preparing to go back to a totally different work and life, and outside of the pandemic, has definitely been scary, but definitely something that I have appreciated being able to be involved in and be able to go back to my coworkers and tell them things that reassure them and be able to listen to their concerns and be able to relay them to the company. So yeah.

AMMARA 00:22:19

Yeah, that's really great to hear that, you know, y'all are able to really just communicate that and really get an opportunity to voice the needs of folks who, you know, are really concerned about this time, because I mean, yeah, COVID is super scary. And having folks having to return soon. So yeah. For you then, since you aren't laid off, but they closed down the cafe, I assume you've been mostly at home?

GABBY 00:22:58

Yeah, I've tried my best to follow all the recommendations of staying socially distant and not going out. It's a little hard though, because I live with my parents. They're grocery workers; they're essential, so the entire time they've been working. And then my partner is a truck driver and delivers food to Trader Joe's grocery stores. So everyone in my life is kind of essential. And so everyone I've been around has kind of had to be, you know, out and about and exposed, in a way not necessarily—like they're safe, they're wearing masks and have safety precautions, but they aren't as lucky as me, who get to try to stay as away from people as possible. I've mostly been worrying more about them than myself through this all since, I'm a year and a half out and I still have no idea when I'll be going back to work. And they're still working and having to deal with the life of the pandemic.

AMMARA 00:24:16

Yeah, that's definitely—all this uncertainty is just really stressful, I'm sure. And there's a question I wanted to ask, but it slipped away.

GABBY 00:24:32

It'll come back.

AMMARA 00:24:41

I guess I'll come back to it if it comes around. But—so you did speak to how you're kind of surrounded by folks who are essential workers. So were you yourself also designated a frontline or essential worker when the governor's ordinance of the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order came out?

GABBY 00:25:02

Technically no, because we were considered like the food service restaurant type of situation. So a lot of those places were closed right away. And I think, as we go up and down in steps, in phases, you know,

my company continues to try to make plans to reopen, and then Google, the higher gods go, 'No, we're not doing it,' or, 'Yes, we're gonna do it.' And then two days before say no, so it's been very uncertain. We've had like, at least three intended times to go back to work, and it just hasn't happened because of the state of the pandemic in Washington. Like, it's just not safe. And our company at least is recognizing it. Granted, it's very late in the game, every time they try to reopen, but yeah.

AMMARA 00:26:08

Also, I remember the question now. It was (*chuckles*) it was wanting to—I was kind of curious about, I guess, since you are off of work, and I know you mentioned still having meetings and doing work with the union, on how to prepare how to go back. But I guess, do you, currently being at home, do you kind of have a routine set at all, of what your day-to-day activities now look like?

GABBY 00:26:34

In the beginning, no (*laughs*). There was no, really—no one really knew what was going on and what we were gonna do. And then as the pandemic progressed, my union has generated a lot of different volunteer opportunities to help my fellow members and other workers in our industry. Hospitality and food service was hit really hard with the pandemic, and a lot of my union still aren't back at work and don't know when they're going back to work and haven't been paid, so they're on unemployment. So for a while I was volunteering regularly on—Unite Here made a hotline for workers. And we would answer, you know, questions about unemployment; we'd help them find relief resources, whether it was housing, or utilities, and things like that. And then I stepped away from that, and have just been doing a lot of meetings with APALA, my extra volunteer group, to support our AAPI community during this time. And then I've also just been having meetings with my union, just about other ways to support laid off workers.

GABBY 00:28:04

Recently, with the American Relief Act, laid off workers are eligible for Cobra health insurance for six months for free. So we've been making calls to workers to let them know that they may be qualified, and helping them over the phone fill out the form to apply. So yeah, I just—so I'm dipping my toes in so many things, because I have so much free time that it often is, like, I get up and I have a lot of Zoom meetings, or I agree to do things like this, or other activities, and events that are all socially distant and through Zoom. But, yeah, I just mostly get up and have interspersed meetings throughout Monday through Friday. Kind of feels like having a full-time job, but it's just weird, because it's not something I've ever done. I've always been in the working class, like, on my feet serving people. So it is a weird feeling to feel like my job is on the computer.

AMMARA 00:29:18

Yeah, that's definitely a shift. And the work you're doing is definitely really important. So yeah, thanks so much for supporting workers and, you know, securing access to resources that the government continually denies, right. So yeah, that's really important. So we do have a section of questions about

health and safety, but considering that I know—your workplace closed down, I'm not sure how relevant it's going to be. Can I ask like, was it right when the pandemic began that your workplace shut down or do you have like—can you describe what period of time between, you know, when things started, and then kind of the timeline of that?

GABBY 00:30:10

Yeah, so they—we didn't close until, whatever state lockdown situation happened—I can't remember when that was, but we were open for a gap before that. And so a lot of it was management trying to shift with the ever-changing narrative of how dangerous or how not dangerous certain things were with the pandemic. So, we were explicitly told not to wear masks, partially because at the beginning, the CDC said not to, and then also because they didn't want us scaring the tech workers (*chuckles*). Like, it was something serious or like we were contaminating them, I don't know. It was—there's a lot that goes into our contracted company trying to appease Google and their workers. There was an increased amount of sanitation. So basically, one of my coworker's jobs was to walk around the lobby, and sanitize every surface like every five minutes, ten minutes.

GABBY 00:31:17

And we took away almost everything that was self-serve and that people could touch and cross contaminate. So no one was allowed to put in their own sugar in their coffee. We couldn't—they couldn't serve themselves anything, basically. And I know, eventually, as things slowed down, and people started to stay home a little bit more because they can work from home, they shifted some of my coworkers to serving food in the cafes. So our cafeteria is—a lot of them are buffet style. So you just serve yourself. And it got to the point where there was someone at each station serving the Googler the food. So yeah, things changed very rapidly. And then it was like, Oh, the state's going in lockdown. Basically, we're not going to be back for two weeks, go home and stay safe. And we'll let you know. And then here we are a year and a half later. And they've only just slowly reopened. Some of my coworkers have been repurposed into what they call ruse crew, which is basically like, the team designated to help facilitate Googlers. So only a few are starting to go back. They basically sit at the door and make sure they temp themselves, and they took the survey that a lot of places have about, Have you had these symptoms, and all those things. And then they just make sure people have masks and kind of patrol to make sure people are wearing their masks. It's a very strange change from serving food to now like being health patrol in a way. And they're really—and like a good amount of my coworkers will be going back to doing that when we go back fully, and then some of us will be in food because of the social distancing requirements even in our spaces. So yeah, it's a rapid change. And things are just continuously changing. It might change before I go back. I'm not sure.

AMMARA 00:33:28

Wow, yeah. What a shift of jobs (*laughs*). I imagine that's probably definitely a lot slower than the pace of working with serving food though.

GABBY 00:33:40

Yeah, definitely.

AMMARA 00:33:44

Okay, so you said that they told you not to wear masks and then once the lockdown happened you just—all of y'all went home. I guess, during that time, as news about the pandemic started, were you ever like, I guess afraid of your health or concerned about your health while working in that period?

GABBY 00:34:15

Since it was all so new, and it was—when I had heard about all these things coming out, and it seemed like it was only going to affect people who are older, as someone who is young and healthy, I didn't feel too worried about myself. I was more worried about, you know, my coworkers who were older or had health problems. And then you know, family of mine who were older and same thing, have health problems or what-not. I was more concerned about them. So for me it was—it wasn't as scary until things got really serious, like we locked down and then I slowly started to find out more and more people in my life were either coming in contact with COVID, kept getting COVID, or even hearing about fellow union members who have passed away from COVID during the time. And it's, you know, hard, since we're all so confined to our homes that we don't know really what's going on with everybody else. So yeah, I've—my fear for myself has slowly increased with time as more and more information has come. I am trying my best to do what I can to protect myself because I had to realize anything that I do directly affects any of the people that I have in my bubble. So my parents, my nieces and nephews, my siblings. If we wanted to continue having—seeing each other at all, we had to be more aware of what we were doing.

AMMARA 00:36:01

So I know, you've kind of mentioned this previously. And I don't know if you have anything else to say about it. But did you want to add anything else about any actions that you or your union or your coworkers took to, you know, address COVID issues within the workplace? As I know, you weren't—you haven't been in work, but I know you've been doing a lot of work to support folks who are working right now. So I don't know, if you'd like to elaborate at all on that?

GABBY 00:36:34

Yeah. I know my union has definitely been on the frontlines of ensuring that any workers who are at work have proper PPE. Because I know for a while there were just lots of excuses about not being able to supply masks, and things like that to workers, which were a true reality; it was hard to find basically anything for a period of time, whether it was Clorox wipes, or disinfecting anything, products. And then, for my coworkers, it's just mostly been—we've been relaying to the company the things that we're concerned about about our job, and they have definitely taken the steps to ensure that there will be safety when we go back. And you know, like I said earlier, we get to do walk-throughs. And so I didn't do a walk-through of my building, because it wasn't opening, but my other shop stewards did. And you know,

they felt really good about the safety implementations they put in; there's just, you know, some restrictions based on the buildings we're in. Some spaces weren't meant for social distancing. And so we're trying—kind of having conversations about that, of like, how do we best communicate those things to our coworkers. And then—trying to think what else. Oh, and then like, one of the things that the union's been doing is helping people sign up for vaccines. So I, myself, got an appointment for a vaccine. So I'm half vaccinated. And just encouraging people if they want to, the union has resources, and has partnered with the City of Seattle to have access to appointments before they go to the general public, for workers. And so just getting people signed up for that, and now helping people in their families sign up for that in the King County area, that's been really cool. Just—I know being vaccinated is a touchy subject in this country. But a lot of people find a lot of sense of relief, getting the vaccine and feeling like they have some more safety than just like the PPE that we're all having to wear all the time. That's been really cool for me to be able to facilitate that for people. And then, trying to think what else? Yeah, just like trying to ensure that workers have safety. The ones that are working. And that, you know, we've continued to fight for things for all the people who aren't working because unemployment is at the highest it's ever been. So there's also things that go along with that. And so it might not be safety, but their livelihoods are at stake. So, things like that.

AMMARA 00:39:28

Yeah, thanks for sharing that. So I guess it sounds like for the most part, your company has responded pretty positively to feedback and to the concerns that y'all have conveyed. Would you like to comment at all about that, or?

GABBY 00:39:51

I think if it weren't for having my union, they would have paid attention because obviously, the world we're in, everyone's under a microscope when it comes to these things during a pandemic. But I think knowing how the company was before we had a union, and the safety things they already ignored, that weren't even pandemic-related, I think there would have been a lot of more difficulty to getting our concerns fixed. And, you know, we're a contracted company for a tech company. So they care more about what the company they're contracted for wants than the workers in most senses. So (*coughs*) don't want to talk badly about Compass—Compass is one of the largest, you know, food service, cafeteria service companies in the United States. But I know that they're operating in tons of other places in the state right now. And I don't know how their safety compares to ours; I'm curious if it even compares (*chuckles*). If they're using what we're forcing, and requiring of them, are they utilizing that for other workplaces or not? Because that would be very telling. I'm curious to see, you know, if I could talk to other Compass workers or get a feel for what's going on in other places, because I know—like, I have a friend who works at Amazon, and they obviously care more about profit, as we all know. He's dealt with a lot of back and forth, and a lot of people just being paid, and then all of a sudden, they fired a bunch of people. Or laid them off. It's hard to say whether I have full faith in my company or not. I have full faith in my union and the strength that we have to hold companies accountable. I guess that would be the thing that I could say, with confidence.

AMMARA 00:42:12

Yeah, for sure. I don't blame you. I think that uncertainty of faith is super valid. Especially because, you know, capitalism (*chuckles*). So it's always about profit over people. But yeah, it's good to know that we do have unions out there protecting people, and hopefully, you know, we can continue to push for those protections.

GABBY 00:42:33

Yeah.

AMMARA 00:42:37

Yeah. Okay. I guess you already touched upon this in terms of like, the way in which—how your company has responded in comparison to other places. Can you—do you have anything that you'd like to say, or could you speak upon more of how, like, your company response compares to non-union workers in your industry?

GABBY 00:43:05

Yeah, I could say that having a union and being in the food service, we have more of a voice to, like, voice our concerns. And for them to be taken seriously. You know, last week was the first week people were—from my team—were in office. And we had a shop stewards meeting. The one shop steward who was in work had a list of issues, some small, some larger, and so we were able to send those off to our general manager for the region. And so we expect those to be addressed, and if they're not, we will continually put pressure on them to change them before more people go back to work. Whereas, I don't think that may be the case in a lot of other workplaces with non-union workers. I think it takes a lot more pushing, and a lot of worker organizing on their own to even like, push back on those things. Because we know, like, in all of our industries, if you're a low wage worker, you're taken advantage of. And so I think there are times when you know, safety doesn't necessarily come first. It's generally profit or maintaining image. I do worry about a lot of workers having to provide their own PPE or being in unsafe situations, but needing a job right now and just doing it because they have to. I do feel for a lot of those workers out there because it's such a hard industry in the first place. Yeah, I'm not sure really what issues—I don't have any personal experiences, since a lot of people in my life in the industry are union, being that my parents are union. I haven't been able to hear a lot of those stories, but I'm sure they're out there because I've heard them before the pandemic. I wouldn't be surprised that they happened during the pandemic, and after the pandemic.

AMMARA 00:45:26

Thank you for sharing that. And then, I guess it sounds like for you, you find yourself in a situation where you are still getting paid. But have you had any access or received any government or community support during this time, due to the virus at all?

GABBY 00:45:53

I've gotten the stimulus checks, because I make under the, I think \$80,000 limit, which I think is telling that if people—they think that people under that need the stimulus checks, that's basically most of the country to be honest (*chuckles*). I feel lucky that I'm getting paid. And then I'm getting these, and so I've been putting that money away. But I know a lot of people in my life who have been laid off and need that money. Yeah, I just—I feel like this secondhand guilt of like, having the union and support in the job that I have, and wishing that for other people. But that's just not the reality. And so I have to continuously tell myself, like, not to hate myself or hate the fact that we are getting paid and other workers are not. It's not my fault. It's capitalism's fault. It's big corporations and their profit over people mindset. That's why I continue to volunteer because those are the people we need to fight, not fight ourselves and be mad at each other, but to the people who are actually causing the problems.

AMMARA 00:47:15

Absolutely, I think I'm just looking forward to the day when we can just have like, radical redistribution of wealth, because, you know, people hoarding billions of dollars should not be a real thing, yet we just—we see that right in front of our eyes. So yeah, just hoping for that day.

GABBY 00:47:34

Yeah, and especially during this time, being a tech capital of the world, or one of the up and coming ones, I've just seen numbers of how much money these companies have made because of the pandemic. Like more than they normally make. And the fact that they're making money during a pandemic is also telling to me, that something that has literally destroyed the livelihood of most of the country is actually benefiting the 1%. It shows exactly what this country is made of, and what it finds important. And it's just sad to have to see that in such large numbers, and people may not recognize it as an issue.

AMMARA 00:48:22

Yeah, absolutely. Totally agree. Okay, another question that I had for you: did you ever get sick? Well, I guess you mentioned this before that you did know people who did get sick. But yeah, did you ever get sick or know anyone who did? And did you have particular, I guess, thoughts or feelings about those occasions?

GABBY 00:48:52

Yeah. So pretty early on in the pandemic, the first like, outbreak if you will, happened in Kirkland. And so that kind of put my community on blast for a lot of people in the state. When a lot of people heard that that's where I live, that's the first thing they asked me about. That was a really weird situation to be in because I know exactly where it was. It's not very far from my home, and it was just the talk of the state at the time. It was really unfortunate for my community to like—they kind of suffered in a way. People kind of treated us as like a pariah of a city. And one of my old coworkers—I used to also work at QFC with my mom as a grocery worker—one of my old coworkers, her brother-in-law passed away from COVID because their mother was in that facility and they went to visit her, and then he got

COVID. He was the first death that I knew about. And the fact that it happened, you know, not too far from my family circle and community circle was very sad and shocking in a way. Like, you know, when you see stuff on the news, it's one thing, but when it happens so close to you, to people you know, it makes it real.

GABBY 00:50:24

And then as time went on, you know, just stories of people getting sick were continuing, but I didn't have anyone, like in my inner family get sick or contract COVID until January of this year. I tested positive for COVID, and so did my partner, and his roommate. And so that was really scary for me, being as I was going back and forth between my parents' house, and I was—I thought I just had a cold, but you know, to be safe, I just stayed in my room and I had very little contact with my family. My mom came in to give me soup and like, soda once. But that was about it. And then, I felt sick on Tuesday. And then I was told on Thursday that people that I had come into contact with had tested positive, so we should go get tested. I flew into a frenzy of panic that I was now going to make everyone in my family sick because I saw my parents, and my parents see my nieces and nephews and my siblings, because they're a source of childcare. I just like, put a mask on, I packed my bag, and I was like, I'm going to my partner's house, call you later. I actually went right at that time to the urgent care at the doctor's office I go to and got tested, and drove here to Lacey to be with my partner. The next day, I think, I found out I tested positive. And so I then had to have the guilt and fear to tell my family that I had tested positive and that they should probably get tested too, probably in a couple days to make sure that you know, the five day period, you're supposed to wait or something. My parents went and they got tested, and then my sister and my niece got tested, because they came through the house for like an hour. And so my sister—like that's how much fear my family had about it. You know, I definitely felt like a pariah for my family for a very, very long stint of time. And it was unfortunate because I got COVID the week before my birthday. I spent my twenty-seventh birthday in quarantine in lockdown. At least I had my partner, but it was still really unfortunate. And it made me kind of reevaluate life in a way, and to think about the pandemic in a different way and how I directly affected my family's health.

GABBY 00:53:14

I quarantined for the two weeks. Even more than that. I stayed away from my family for about a month, because my parents were in no hurry for me to come home. Especially since a lot of locations won't retest you for like, three months after you've tested positive because you can get false positives even if you aren't contagious. I tried my best to stay away from my family. It was really hard on me because my family was just so scared of getting sick, even after a month, two months, they were afraid to be around me; they wouldn't let my nieces and nephews go to my parents' house if I was there. I kind of felt like it was—I had to take responsibility and just not be around. And that really sucked because I'm very close to my family and we do a lot together. It was really hard not to be able to be around them normally and to feel like they were afraid of me. That was kind of one of the leading reasons I got the vaccine right away, was because that would give them peace of mind to be around them and yeah.

GABBY 00:54:36

It was a really hard couple months to the beginning of this year for me and my partner, but you know, I am lucky that I didn't have any severe symptoms. I just had like a normal flu and a fever. I did lose my sense of taste and smell for a couple days. And that was wild—very crazy experience. I do not wish it upon anyone. I feel so bad for people who still have that, even after getting better. Yeah, it's—I have a lot of people in my life who either are really scared of it or are convinced that it's like, a whole scheme or plot or a lie or something. It's just weird. And so I'm like, But I'm living proof that it happened, and I got it, and I got sick, and I experienced some of the symptoms that they've been talking about. And it's still like, it just isn't as real for people unless it happens to them or someone directly in their circle. I'm just trying to, like, now find a way to tell people that I had had COVID and make it not such a taboo thing. I think, you know, a lot of people have had it or will get it. And it's okay. It doesn't mean you're an awful person, because I was doing everything that I could. And, you know, I had a small gathering with four other people, and we somehow contracted it. So it's like, the smallest little things that people do can give you COVID and that doesn't make you an awful person. The awful thing is if you continue to spread it to other people, and you don't take the precautions seriously. I'm just trying to be more honest with people about, I've had it, this was my experience. And people should be okay with that, and not treat people like pariahs or people that they could get sick from still. I think that's something we still are struggling with, at least in my life and in my experience. Yeah, that's been my experience with the pandemic itself and COVID-19.

AMMARA 00:57:13

Wow, thank you for sharing. That's—I can't imagine like, having it. I personally have not had COVID-19, but I've had a lot of close friends, and my partner as well got COVID, and so it was really terrifying to hear about all these cases like just happening really close to home. And so, yeah, it's just—I'm glad you're okay, and I'm glad that you know your partner's okay, and your family's okay.

GABBY 00:57:48

Thanks. Luckily, none of them got it from me. So that was solid. I didn't have to feel guilty. They did get mad at me because they had to get the swab up their nose because of me. It's a small price to pay (*laughs*).

AMMARA 58:05

Yeah, it's—I definitely think what you spoke to about that, you know, just being more open about it is like, I've noticed that too. Like this hesitancy to share when—if you got COVID because there's like this stigma attached to it. And I agree, it's not that you're a bad person, unless you spread it obviously, intentionally now. But I think just the way that this virus is so contagious, and like we're still learning about it. Yeah, thank you for sharing your experience. That makes me wonder, like, during that time that you were in quarantine, because obviously you know, you can't go out of the house, did you have any folks, like family or friends who supported y'all during that time? Or even like beyond your quarantine period, did you have any support of your community?

GABBY 00:59:04

Yeah, so since I quarantined in Lacey, my family particularly didn't help too much while we were in like the extreme quarantine, but my partner's family and community, and his roommate who—they're like, they say their cousins, but their dads are best friends—so their family supported us. They would drop off food and they dropped like—we needed water, so they got like a—we had a five gallon jug water dispenser and they brought a jug of water and like Gatorade and things to keep us hydrated. They had—I felt supported through their, like community and family support. And like, they brought us food multiple times. So we had that, and that was really nice to know that there were people who could go get things for us. And you know, I could still thankfully do all of my meetings on Zoom, even though I had COVID. So I was able to continue my volunteer work—granted, away from people. I couldn't go out and do things or go to actions, because there were actions at the time. And just, it was hard to have to pull back from being physically present. But they all understood and supported me and, you know, offered to help or come drive down and give me support. Just having them say that was reassuring, to know that there were people who cared enough to like, want to come bring me something or help me, even though I was so far away. And so yeah, it really does kind of show who cares for you, I guess, in a way. I did try not to tell too many people, just because I didn't want to cause panic and frenzy of like, my whole family and friends, so a lot of my friends found out afterwards. I didn't really reach out to anyone for help. And afterwards, they were like, Why didn't you tell me? Yeah, I think we had that support from my partner and his roommate's community for sure.

AMMARA 01:01:26

That's awesome. Yeah, good to hear that, you know, there are folks—I think it's so important to be, you know, plugged into community, just so that when there are times of need, there are folks you can go to. So I imagine that, besides that—or I imagine that having COVID was probably a very difficult part of the pandemic for you. Would you say that there would be anything else that was particularly challenging in terms of pandemic life for you so far?

GABBY 01:02:06

Yeah, so I think in the beginning of the pandemic, I had been working so much and volunteering so much that I had kind of hit, I think my limit, and sometimes I say the pandemic was a blessing in disguise for me, because I kind of got—like, crashed and burned. And I took some time off from everything. I stopped volunteering a lot, and I just kind of focused on myself. And I did experience a bout of depression, and that caused me to recognize that I needed help. I was able to—I started doing therapy online via Zoom once a week, and also met a psychiatrist for medication management. I started new medication. That's definitely something that I struggled with at the beginning, and definitely have worked through the pandemic and gotten better at. It's not perfect—we work at it every day—but I definitely have that experience, and have continuously had to, you know, talk with my therapist and reevaluate the way that I'm looking at things, especially since the pandemic is so hard, and it's okay, that it's hard. And it's okay that I'm having a hard time adjusting to all these things, and just being like, open

about it with people, I think has been key for me. And then, right before the pandemic started, my sister had her first child. So it was also really hard for me and my family not to actually, like, be there while she was growing up. We were—we got a couple months in before she got scared of people being around her child, especially like my parents who were working. We didn't get to see them for months, and I didn't see my other nieces and nephews for months. For me, that was really, really hard because I identify as an aunt so much. Not being able to see my family, but let alone the kids, was really hard for me. Especially since I knew a lot of them were really, you know, struggling with schooling online and I wanted to help them, but there's not a lot I can do to help them when it's really like different schooling. That was really difficult for me, and my parents and everyone in my family. We were just so used to getting together that it was just so weird not to be able to. We tried doing Zoom family gatherings and like it worked, but it wasn't really the same. It was very different. And so yeah, I think those are the two things that I struggled with most, outside of like, the pandemic itself. Those are the things that I had to work through while the pandemic was happening.

AMMARA 01:05:21

Yeah, that definitely sounds really difficult. I resonate with those challenges as well. And I'm super happy to hear that you were able to, you know, work and focus on self care, because I think that's something that I also struggled with before this pandemic. And so it's really forced me to, like, you know, kind of look inward. So that's really awesome to hear. And yeah, Zoom—I feel like even though it's, you know, we're trying to strive for connection, Zoom fatigue really hits. Like all your meetings are online, everything is virtual (*chuckles*).

GABBY 01:06:00

Yes, it totally does.

AMMARA 01:06:08

Yeah, speaking of Zoom meetings, I'm also curious about your technology access. So like, during this time, since everything has been really remote, have you had any difficulties at all with anything technological related, whether it's like through video calls, or any internet access or using digital devices in general?

GABBY 01:06:35

In the beginning, I had difficulty because my laptop's webcam just wouldn't work. I tried everything that I knew humanly possible, and I just couldn't get it to work. I couldn't use my laptop, and so I had to start using my phone. And that's kind of difficult with Zoom because when you're in large meetings, you have to like, scroll through to find faces and it's just not ideal, especially when they're sharing screens and stuff like that. And so I got an iPad to try to alleviate some of that. But I've always had access to internet; the only thing I don't have is a printer. So sometimes for some of my in-person stuff that we do safely, I needed to print stuff, and I didn't have that near me. That was difficult. But, you know, I thankfully was born in an era of being tech savvy. So I was able to figure out Zoom; I've used all kinds

of platforms. In the beginning, we used Lifesize, we used Zoom, I've used Google Meets. I've used just about everything.

GABBY 01:07:47

I feel lucky that I can navigate those things. But I have noticed how hard it is for my family. So like my parents, I had to be there to help them get on the family group calls. That's how hard it was for them. And they have smartphones, they have tablets, and they still couldn't figure it out. I've definitely seen like that generation difference of being able to use technology and having to shift to more technology. And then because I'm part of APALA, I've managed to, as the treasurer, utilize our Surface that we purchased for our group. I get to use that, and so that's been really helpful. I'm using it now. It's made working from home a bit easier. Now I just feel like I have so many tech devices, like—I could be on like three meetings if I wanted to. Not that I want to or should, but yeah. I know there's people out there who do stuff like that and I'm just like—it's totally a different world to sit and talk to a screen for hours on end, meeting after meeting. You definitely crave the human interaction and it's close but it's not quite right.

AMMARA 01:09:19

Yeah, for sure. It makes me wonder what it's going to be like transitioning back to in person because most of the things have been virtual. And I know folks feel like they've lost their ability to just have interactive skills with other people—your interpersonal skills. Okay, so yeah, that kind of leads into I guess, like how has the pandemic changed your social life? I know you've mentioned you know, having family gatherings online. But have you—are there any other aspects of your social life that you'd want to speak upon, like, if you had socially distanced gatherings at all, or anything like that?

GABBY 01:10:07

Yeah, so, my two coworkers that work with me in my coffee shop, we're really, really close, and we used to spend a lot of time together. Obviously, we worked for eight hours with each other. But we also spent a lot of time outside of work together. And so the pandemic definitely, like, limited us. We started doing like, Google Duo calls on our phones. So we'll chat that way. And then we did some socially distanced mask-wearing walks around Green Lake, because that's kind of like a center meeting point, and during the summer, it was nice. It was nice to actually get out and like, go do something. And it was just the three of us. And then we'd sit, like, socially distanced on a blanket and eat snacks or something, and just chat. That was like a nice thing that we were able to do. We haven't done it a lot because of the weather now and it's like, hard to want to go anywhere. Also, because of the opening and closing of phases going up and down. I was able to get them both set up with vaccination appointments, so we may all be vaccinated soon and feel safer about gathering more often.

GABBY 01:11:36

Yeah, I'm trying to think of other things that I've done. I've done like, socially distanced volunteer organizing meetings, in parks and stuff. I've also done like, door knocking with people. So having to,

you know, have the windows slightly rolled down, masked or double masked in a car with someone—it's not the most comfortable thing in the world, but in order to get some of the real life organizing done, we kind of had to find ways to do it. I've gone to, you know, rallies and things like that. It's a little harder to social distance there, so I haven't been to too many, because I didn't really feel that safe about it. And yeah, I don't—it's definitely limited my social circle's ability to do things. I've done video chats with some of my friends. And we played Jackbox, I think it's called or whatever; you played games together online. So that was fun; that was like a new way to like, play with each other. And then one of my friends convinced us to get a tabletop simulator so we could play board games together. It basically is just a simulator where you can play basically any board game known to man, because we used to get together and play board games, like just buy random board games and play them together. So that's been a new way to do those things. But it's definitely hard with everyone's schedule and like being so distant to keep appointments with each other and not cancel or have other things going on. My socializing has definitely gone down. I'm an introvert, but I tend to have a social life, so the pandemic has definitely really limited my social life (*laughs*).

AMMARA 01:13:43

No, yeah, I definitely can relate to that, too. As an introvert, I think I've noticed that just socializing has become a lot more exhausting, too. But it does feel nice when you have the opportunity to play online games. I just found out that there's an online platform for like online scattergories yesterday, that was really fun.

GABBY 01:14:06

Oh, we also streamed a movie and watched a movie together one time. That was interesting.

AMMARA 01:14:13

Was there any lag at all?

GABBY 01:14:15

There was, in the beginning. We used Discord I think, so that was also a new platform I had to navigate. But it was cool. We watched the Wonder Woman movie, the newer 1985, '87? I don't remember, it has a year in it. So that was cool. And then I think we—I also did it with someone out of state. We synced up our screens, and we were facetimeing them. And so we watched the last two episodes of Game of Thrones because my partner had just watched it and then he hadn't watched the last two episodes, so we watched it in sync (*chuckles*). That was fun, to be able to do that, because I would have never done that before. Like, why don't we just go to the same place and watch it, type of thing? Or even being able to go to the movie theater? Like, can't really do that now. So that was yeah—that's also one of the things I've found to do.

AMMARA 01:15:15

So many fun experiments during quarantine for sure. Do you—would you like to speak about or speak to how the pandemic has impacted your sense of personal well-being? I know you touched a little bit about that, in terms of like, mental health, but I don't know if there's anything else you wanted to talk about in regards to that?

GABBY 01:15:42

Yeah, I think first and foremost, I focused a lot on my mental health, and therapy has been really helpful for me. And making sure to have that every week has definitely been, like a relief in a way for me, from a lot of my personal burdening—burdening myself—and then just consciously working on some of the things we talked about, like setting boundaries, and actually just like being really introspective on how I feel, and my emotions. I think being able to slow down and not have so much going on all the time helps me be more in tune with what I need, what I want, and like how I am to people and how I'm receiving people as well. I think before I was just so go-go-go that I was ignoring myself a lot of the time. And I never like took a second to breathe and be like, Am I okay? Like until the pandemic hit, and we closed and I literally fell apart. And so I definitely don't want to put myself in that situation again.

GABBY 01:16:57

I've been actively like, not trying to over commit myself to things and being firm on my commitment with people in only taking on what I think I can do. I think before, there was the sense of like, needing to do everything that I'm asked to do. And I think slowing down and having the pandemic made me realize, I don't have to do everything people ask me to do; that's actually unhealthy and unrealistic. And then verbalizing that to people to make them understand too, I think—it's just been a good time for everyone to kind of like, reevaluate our lives and how we're going about things I think. And, you know, therapy has helped me the most, but also just having more time to have conversations with people I'm close with too. I started dating my partner, like, a couple of months before the pandemic hit, and so that was a different experience. And it's funny to say we're a pandemic relationship, but like most of our relationship was in the pandemic. And I think, you know, I had to work more on being around another person a lot more than before. And being more mindful of being honest, and being true to your emotions and things like that, so that like, you're not silently frustrated with each other but in the same room or something. I've also had more time to, you know, express my mental health issues with my mom, and have those conversations with her and be more open. And that's helped our relationship a lot. And, you know, I think I've also just—having those experiences pushed me to be more like, open with a lot of my family members, more so than I had been before. And so, you know, I guess I reevaluated and realized the things that are important to me and trying to address those more often. And taking care of myself, first and foremost—like, I think a lot of us tend to put others before ourselves, and so the pandemic has been really helpful in teaching me to do the opposite.

AMMARA 01:19:29

Yeah, for sure. I think that—I've witnessed that a lot with folks in my circle as well. And that's funny that you mentioned that your relationship has been mostly in a pandemic because my relationship also

has been. So it's been kind of interesting to also see that kind of meld with the pandemic self of like, you got to verbalize your needs, you got to set boundaries, otherwise, you know, it's not going to be good for anybody, especially yourself.

GABBY 01:19:57

Yeah, and you got to come up with ways to entertain yourself and do things not out in public (*chuckles*).

AMMARA 01:20:05

Yeah for sure. Okay, we only have like a couple more questions left. So thank you so much for hanging in there. Another question that I had was kind of just about like how—has the pandemic impacted your access to food at all or like did it have impacts on your housing situation or like, economics?

GABBY 01:20:37

Luckily, not for me, as I was still getting paid. We did obviously see the craziness that happened in grocery stores, where everyone just panic-bought everything. And so, you know, I first-hand got to hear the stories of my parents being like, Yeah, these people were fighting over this last package of, I don't know, paper towels, and just crazy stories that I didn't really expect. And, you know, that meant we also didn't have access to those things because they weren't in the grocery store. I luckily moved in with my parents, just in the nick of time, like, just over a year, in time to not have to struggle with rent or that issue. And so housing has been stable for me. I have been paying my parents to help with housing, because I know it's a struggle. That's definitely been something. But yeah, generally, I continue to feel very lucky that the pandemic hasn't affected my life as much as most Americans right now. I try to remember that and still be humble and help people who don't have that.

AMMARA 01:22:13

How do you think life will be different after this?

GABBY 01:22:20

Well, hopefully, people will be more conscious of their health, and how that affects people around them. I know there's still quite the debate about masks and the uproar about that, but I think that will carry on because people are still, in a few years, going to be afraid of someone coughing on the bus or something. Or someone having a sniffly nose even if it's allergies. I think, hopefully, workers safety will stick around and be more of like a present issue and something that people can fight for because this is a prime time and example to like, show that these essential workers, and these workers exist, and we are now recognizing them, but we should protect them at the same time. I think, you know, social distancing may stick around for quite some time; people are going to be really afraid of each other. I personally am excited for that because working in the industry I work in, I've seen a lot of gross things happen and people do things that I'm like, You would not do that at home, and you're doing that here in a shared space. Like, it's baffling to me. And so I'm kind of excited about like, people being more concerned about cleanliness, and shared spaces, because before they weren't like that, at least in my experience at

my job. Like, people were just gross (*chuckles*). And I'm—I joke with my coworkers, I'm not a very touchy feely person. So I'm kind of excited of the fact that like, greeting people will be less like—there's not an expectation to hug people or shake hands or do those things. Because I'm not a really big fan of those things myself. I think people will be afraid still of being in each other's bubbles. Those are all, I guess, selfish reasons, the things that I can think of. Yeah, and I think potentially mask wearing in the food industry is going to probably be around for a very long time at this point, because people are so hyper aware of everything now. I think those things are—those are a couple of things I can think of off the top of my head, that I think will stay around or have the potential to stay around.

AMMARA 01:25:10

Yeah, I can definitely see that too. I think talking with folks in my circles and stuff—it will be a transition, just like the way that you know, we had to transition everything, transitioning out is also going to be what will happen. And then I guess for this period of time, like, is there anything that surprised you during the pandemic? Or is there anything, any positive experiences that you've had, that you've been reflecting on, that you'd like to share?

GABBY 01:25:46

Um, I think a lot of the good things that have come out also come with the, like, bad things. So, you know, a lot of people are at home and consuming media a lot more. And so I think a lot of social issues are hitting the spotlight a bit more. And people are actually having conversations about it. Because before I was—I'm an activist, labor activist and activist as a whole. And so I've participated in a lot of the movements up until now. And they've been touchy subjects with people in my family, and in my community, it's hard to talk about certain things. I think with the pandemic, we've seen, obviously, in the forefront, Black Lives Matter, coming back around, and being in people's faces, and like, obviously, the George Floyd case being very, very present in media, and just the continuous deaths of Black men and women being more spoken about. My family's actually brought up some of these things, because they're watching the news, or have the TV on more often. But, you know, that comes with the bad of like, racism is still thing, and these conversations need to happen. And, you know, my family is not free of those things either. Having to have those tough conversations is hard, but it's good at the same time, because there won't be change unless we talk about it.

GABBY 01:27:26

The same with, you know, the racism and xenophobia against the AAPI community; Asians are being increasingly more in danger, as we've seen in the random attacks on the elderly, to the shootings in Atlanta, and Indianapolis. Those women were working, they were workers, and they were killed, because of some man's crazy temptations. Recognizing these things are happening, and calling them what they are—like, those are hate crimes and race-based attacks—and we need to recognize that. I think—people consuming more media, and like, being more involved in that way, I think has been a good shift, because before people could kind of just close their window and be like, Oh, it's not happening if I don't like, look at it. Whereas now it's like, just everywhere; it's on your social media, it's

on the news. It's in everything. And so I think that's been really positive, even though those are negative experiences. I think the work of our communities is being more—what's the word—there's been more of a focus on it in the wider media platforms. And there's more conversations being had about, like, the issues that the United States has, that are deeply rooted—and I've been having a lot of fun conversations with people in my life, and trying to teach them why the things they say are wrong, or the things that they believe are wrong. The pandemic has definitely given us that chance. And what other things? Like, it's weird to call that thing—those things happening, a good thing. But you know, the pandemic has definitely shown us like, what the world is capable of. That's like the only thing that I can really—that comes to mind, is just that more presence of the issues that are actually happening.

AMMARA 01:29:52

Yeah, I definitely think that's a huge thing that I've also been kind of witnessing. It's definitely been kind of overwhelming too, but it's also I think—yeah, vocalizing what's been going on and like, centering those experiences more and understanding like, okay, now, we really got to start unpacking like, you know, the problems of this country, white supremacy, colonialism. All isms. So yeah.

GABBY 01:30:21

And we luckily got rid of Trump. So that was a big win for me, in my opinion (*chuckles*).

AMMARA 01:30:27

Yeah, definitely glad that that's over, while also recognizing there's still a lot of work to be done. But yeah, like the work that you're doing, and then the work that I've been doing in community as well, that's still going on. So we just keep at it. Yeah, so I guess this is the last question. Are there any other thoughts that you'd like to share, on anything that we might have missed that you feel is important to talk about in regards to your experience during COVID, as a worker, or like, during your time at home? Anything you'd like to share?

GABBY 01:31:09

Um, no, I don't think so. I've spoken a lot (*chuckles*). Obviously, that's the point of this interview. I do appreciate you all for having this space, and doing this. I think, you know, at APALA, we also have done oral histories, and I think my union relies heavily on the organizing tactic of storytelling. People telling their story, knowing how to tell their story, and being able to feel confident in telling their story, and that it's important, is like a great opportunity to have, especially for people of color. Especially workers, especially immigrants, and especially like non-native English speakers. I think those are the things that are left out of history. And so I'm glad that there's projects like this, because, you know, our history books are written by the people in power, and the people in power are white and are trying to erase our history. Being able to share it, have record of it, and make sure that those things aren't just swept under the rug anymore, I think it's really cool to see these projects happening. And that's why I was happy to do this interview and to, you know, share my piece of mind and my story, because as a child of immigrants, it's not easy to be in this country. As a child of immigrants or as immigrants at all. It's not

easy being a woman, it's not easy being someone with brown skin. And so just being able to really center those stories, I think is really important. And I'm glad to be here and for you guys to be doing this.

AMMARA 01:33:00

Yes, yes to all of that. Yeah. Thank you so much for volunteering your time and you know letting us record this story. Because, yeah, voices that you mentioned of the folks who are in the working class, folks who are women, LGBTQ, folks of color, immigrants, non-native English speakers—like these are the stories that don't get centered and there's so much to learn and so much wisdom. So yeah, I was really excited to hear about your story. Thank you so much for sharing. I'm gonna go ahead and pause this Zoom recording, but there's a couple last questions just for logistics.